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ABSTRACT

This speech presents instructional evaluation techniques currently used in Belleville, Illinois. These are based on two criteria: (1) community opinion, and (2) performance level of students. To discover community opinions, needs, priorities, and levels of support, questionnaires are distributed, presenting a series of curricular goals and soliciting community opinions on (A) the relative importance of each goal, and (B) the success of the program in achieving that goal. Another technique is to organize school-community councils, representative of various school organizations and neighborhoods. From these, a district-wide community council is formed. Student performance is measured by both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing. The latter, entitled "Instructional Monitoring System," consists of three components: (a) a skills continuum, reflecting district faculty decisions about what skills should be taught at what level; (b) exit tests, measuring how much students have learned from classes; and (c) objective evaluation, depending on analysis of the exit tests to determine the effectiveness of the program for individual students, classes, schools, or the entire district. These test results can be used to earn community support and to develop responsive educational programs. (TE)

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HOW TO EVALUATE YOU SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Joseph J. Cipfl

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
the National School Boards Association,
Houston, Texas, March 31-April 3, 1984.

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1984 NSBA Convention-Houston, March 31 - April 3
Clinic No. B-34 Speaker: Cipfl (Illinois)

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B-34
How to Evaluate Your School Instructional Programs

If instructional programming is to be maximally successful, provision must be made for evaluation. Such evaluation will necessitate the collection of information about both attitudes and skills.

From a board member's and/or a administrator's point of view, evaluation of instructional programming is usually based upon two related, and yet sometimes independent criteria. The two criteria are:

a. the broad-based community held opinion of the instructional program of the school district.

b. the performance levels of students.

In the time allotted this morning, I would like to address each of these two criteria. I will try not to philosophize for you about instructional evaluation, but rather I want to share with you "nuts and bolts" information regarding techniques and strategies we are utilizing in Belleville, Illinois to successfully accomplish the task of evaluation.

In order for you as a board member or administrator to effectively evaluate programs, you must determine community need, community pricrity and community support. Likewise, you must determine how well the students are performing. Are they learning what you are teaching? How do they compare with other students across the nation?

Let's begin with community-held opinions. I suggest to you that if you want to know what your community thinks about your schools and about your instructional programs, ask them. I suggest to you that you conduct a needs assessment. As a contemporary school leader, you must work with the community to hammer out goals and then together develop ways to meet those goals.

You'll find it is to your advantage to seek the opinions of community members before their opinions become headlines in the morning paper. The benefits of increased

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cooperation and support for the schools within your community will outweigh the effort of creating an opportunity for a candid exchange of views.

The first step in a needs assessment process is to ask yourself two basic questions. One, are you willing to listen to the opinions of your community? Two, are you ready to respond to their criticisms and suggestions and to plan for change? Remember, nothing is worse than asking for opinions that you don't intend to use.

The second step in your needs assessment is to decide exactly what information you desire and how you are going to ask for it.

The third step, is to train either board members and/or administrators to present the needs assessment questionnaires to the community.

And, of course, the final phase of the process is to report the results of the needs assessment to the community.

I would now like to share with you a needs assessment that we have utilized in Belleville, Illinois. I will make available to you a complete copy of the instrument. But if you will focus your attention on the screen, I would like to show you one page of our needs assessment survey.

Let's look at Item No. 3, "Develop Skills in Social Sciences." Included in this goal, as indicated, are such topics as "develop an understanding of other people and their culture as well as our own," "develop an understanding of political, economic and social patterns," "develop an understanding of the principle of living in the family group," "develop an ability to adjust to the changing demands of society." Of this goal we ask two questions of our community, as we did of each goal within the assessment survey. The first question, "How important is this goal?" Respondents could choose, "great importance," "medium importance," or "little importance." Secondly, we asked them, "How well is this goal being met?" Respondents had four choices, "too much," "just right," not enough," or "do not know."

As we tallied the survey, we were able to determine which goals the community felt to be the most important; and, likewise, we could identify if we were meeting those goals to the degree that the community thought necessary. An excellent tool!

Another technique to judge or gauge the community opinion, so as to help you as a board member or administrator evaluate the effectiveness of your instructional programs, is the organization and development of school-community councils at each of your attendance centers. In our school district, at the building level, councils are formed which are representative of the various organizations of the school -- PTA, mothers' clubs, band clubs, and booster clubs. The councils are also representative of the various neighborhoods that the schools serve. Both parents and non-parents hold membership on these councils. On a regularly scheduled basis, the principal meets with his or her school-community council in order to discuss items of mutual importance, and mutual concern. Selection of the items for discussion are made both by the council members and the principal. The school community council forms a network of communication. The discussions center around explanation, clarification, statements of satisfaction, or statements of dissatisfaction.

From the individual school-community councils, a district-wide community council is formed with each of the schools having two representatives on the district council. This body meets on a regularly scheduled basis with me, the superintendent. The format is identical to the building-level council, however, district-level concerns rather than building-level concerns are discussed.

I unequivocally recommend the formation of school community councils in your district. We have found these councils to be an excellent vehicle for effective communication. The moods, the opinions and the ideas of the community can be secured and can be closely monitored.

Let's move on now to the second criteria in order to determine effectiveness of instructional programs and that is student performance. If you are a board member or an administrator, in order for you to objectively evaluate instructional programming, you must carefully examine student performance. In recent years, nation-wide concern about our instructional programming has surfaced due to alleged deterioration of standardized test scores. This morning I have a few suggestions on how you can use test results to earn community support for your schools and to develop educational programs that respond to gaps or deficiencies in your educational offerings.

To understand the significance of scores, you need to interpret them. This can be a confusing and frustrating task. First, you need to look at the type of tests your students take. Are the tests norm-referenced or are they criterion-referenced? Norm-referenced tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, provide board members and adminstrators with an overview of the achievement, skill mastery if you will, of students relative to a national sample of students at a specific grade level. As a board member or an administrator, you must keep in mind that these tests, do not tell you specifically what your students do not know, and, ask a limited number of questions about a few broadly defined education objectives. But even though these tests are not specific in terms of the subject area you teach in your district, they do provide valuable information that allows you to compare generally how well your students are achieving in relation to students around the country.

Criterion-referenced tests, on the other hand, measure mastery of specific objectives contained in your school system's curriculum. Criterion-referenced tests can tell specifically how well students are learning the subject matter that you have identified should be taught in your particular school district.

In Belleville, Illinois, we use both standardized tests and criterion-referenced tests. At each grade level, standardized achievement tests are administered in order to determine how well boys and girls in Belleville compare to boys and girls across the nation.

For the remainder of time I have left this morning I would like to talk with you about the kind of criterion-referenced testing program that is in operation in our school district. The actual testing is only one segment of the program we have entitled, "The Instructional Monitoring System." It is a comprehensive system intended to develop the optimal potential in all of our students. It has been in full operation for approximately six years.

The needs that brought about the development of our IMS system, I believe, are universal and not just peculiar to our school district. They are:

1. In the schools, we are dealing with an extremely heavy and a extremely diverse curriculum.

2. It is our opinion that publishing companies have been dictating the volumne as well as the scope and sequence of curriculum.

3. We believe that many teachers are unaware specifically what their instructional responsibilities are in each area of the curriculum. The textbook is their curriculum. We have observed that, for example, a third grade teacher knows little or nothing specifically about, what a child is taught in the second grade or what is going to be taught in the fourth grade.

4. We believe that parents and students need to know, deserve to know, what the academic expectations are. Prior to the implementation of our Instructional Monitoring System, we found it difficult to relate this information with any degree of ease and assurance.

What is the Belleville Instructional Monitoring System? It has three component parts:

1. Skills Continuums

2. Exit Tests

3. Evaluation

The sample of the skill continuum shown on the screen is typical of the continuums for each of our instructional areas. The continuums reflect district faculty decisions regarding skills that students should be taught and at what level they should be taught. The advantages of the skills continuums are:

1. Give good instructional direction to the teacher.

2. Identify specific skills children learn and when.

3. Tell the teacher whether the skill is to be introduced, taught, or reinforced.

4. Allow the teacher to tell at a glance what kind of instruction will be given in a skill area the following year or was given in a skill area the previous year.

5. Relate clearly and succintly to parents what skills their children are expected to attain.

6. Give a solid foundation for a selection of instructional materials to teach the identified skills.

Let's now take a look at a second component part of the IMS system -- Exit Testing. On the screen, you can see the first part of our sixth grade math exit test. The work "exit" is used intentionally. These tests are administered at the third grade, the sixth grade, and the eighth grade level -- we are an elementary district. They are administered at the third grade because this is the end of a strong concentration in basic skill development; at the sixth grade because this is the completion of the student's elementary school work; and, at the eighth grade because this is the completion of the student's work in our junior high program.

The exit tests were developed by our district's teachers. They are designed to test exactly what we teach. Remember, I indicated to you that this was a criterion-referenced testing program. We are testing what we are teaching. The test questions match directly to the continuums

The third component part of the IMS System is objective evaluation of the effectiveness of our instructional programming. The exit tests provide us with the necessary data for evaluation.

1. We can look at a particular student. If we look at the results of his or her exit tests, we can identify exactly those skills which the student has mastered and those skills which the student has failed to master. We can secure an assessment of the skill mastery level of each student.

2. We can look at a particular classroom and identify the skill mastery level of that particular class. We can identify the skills they have mastered and those that they haven't. Excellent information for the teacher.

3. We can look at a particular school building. Examination of the exit test results can identify the strengths and weaknesses of a school population from which the principal and his/her faculty can make instructional decisions.

4. We can look at ourselves as an entire district. We can identify our strengths, our weaknesses, our areas of need.

The Instructional Monitoring System has provided us a framework from which we can evaluate the effectiveness of our instructional programs upon a student, upon a class, upon a particular school, or the entire district. A most valuable system for parents, for teachers, for principals, for district office administrators, and certainly, for the Board of Education.

The Instructional Monitoring System has brought more credibility, more accountablity, more continuity , and more evaluation to our instructional program, than any technique or any strategy that we have ever implemented. I strongly suggest that you examine the implications of our program for your district. I would be happy to meet with any of you to share in more detail, the mechanics of our program.

I want to thank you for being here this morning. I have left information relative to our needs assessment survey, our school-community councils, and our Instructional Monitoring System on the table.

This concludes my comments.